

BETHEA DESCRIBES EUROPEAN TOUR.

WHAT HE HEARD AND SAW AS
A MEMBER OF THE FORD
PEACE EXPEDITION.

Columbia, January 23:—A J. Bethea, Lieutenant Governor of South Carolina, after undergoing many hardships and disagreeable experiences as a member of the Ford peace party, returned this morning from New York, where he landed yesterday after a tempestuous trip across the Atlantic on the liner New York. "It seems almost like a miracle that I am left to tell the story," said Mr. Bethea today in describing his experiences.

Mr. Bethea thinks that the sympathies of the people of Norway, Denmark and Holland are with the Entente allies, while the citizens of Sweden favor the Central Powers, because of an old grudge against Russia.

The Lieutenant Governor interestingly describes his trip through Germany. He says that before you enter German territory, your person and belongings are put through a thorough search. He was stripped to the skin, and his belongings minutely scrutinized; even his medicines were poured on the fire to test if they were explosives. "These Germans do things thoroughly," said Mr. Bethea, in describing the Teutons. He thinks that their efficiency would be a good thing for the American people.

Mr. Bethea says Henry Ford is an unselfish, big-hearted man, of whom too much cannot be said in praise. He is a man, said the Lieutenant Governor, who would spend his entire fortune for peace. Measured by motive and purpose, Mr. Bethea said that the peace pilgrimage was successful, in that peace talk had been started among the neutral and belligerent nations.

"The world would be a much better place to live in if we had more men of the type of Henry Ford," avers Mr. Bethea.

The following interview was given out by Mr. Bethea today:

From the day I left New York till my return yesterday my trip was a continuous round of trying, but thrilling, experience. It seems almost like a miracle that I am left to tell the story.

I found the bitter cold in the Scandinavian countries too much for me, and in Sweden I nearly succumbed to its rigors. It was in Stockholm that I was seriously sick for several days, causing me to miss an earlier boat on my return trip home. A terrible storm at sea still further delayed my arrival.

The trip over was without particular incident, except for the two days and nights in the harbor at Kirkwall, when we were prisoners of a British man-of-war. It is not an easy feeling to have torpedo boats lurking around and pointing their guns at you, but that is the penalty all have to pay who pass that way these days. England has literally swept the seas and fixed the boundary line beyond which no ship dare cross till she gives the word. The danger zone, in which many mines are afloat, also gives you a ticklish feeling, and is not good for the nerves if you cannot sleep.

LAND IN NORWAY.

We landed in Christiania, Norway, and found an interesting people and country. It was the height of the winter season and everything was white with snow. Thousands were giving their time to skating, the great national sport, which consists of sliding over the hills and mountains of snow. Sweden likewise was in the grip of winter, but at Stockholm there was a warm welcome to a beautiful and thrifty city. Wages and goods are high. This is true in all the border neutral countries. Times are good in Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Holland, but of course there are many interests that suffer from the war. As in America, so in these countries, there is some division of sentiment on the question of the war. But it seemed to me that in Norway, Denmark and Holland sympathy was with the allies, while in Sweden it was with Germany. Sweden has an old grudge against

Russia, and the other neutral countries are afraid of the growing military power in Germany.

LEFT FORD PARTY.

In Copenhagen I left the Ford party to hurry home. To do this it was necessary for me to have my passports vised for belligerent countries. Only as a special courtesy from German and English consuls was I able to accomplish this, for our country, except in rare cases, grants no passports to belligerent countries, and orders have been issued against it. But I had good luck and this gave me a chance to see Germany and England at first hand in a state of war. It also gave me the unique experience in getting in and out of Germany at the present time. They take nothing for granted. It matters not what credentials or passports or letters you bear, nor who you are. You must submit to the test before you pass. And you can just bet that when the Germans do a thing it is done thoroughly. They talk little and ask but few questions, but when they have done with you, you know that you have been examined. In my case every article was taken from my baggage and examined with the utmost care, books and papers and pictures were taken in charge and peroxide of hydrogen and other medicines I had were emptied upon a heap of coal in the belief that they were either invisible ink or explosives.

GREAT SCRUTINY.

The baggage itself was observed with great scrutiny. Still not satisfied, two officers escorted me to a private dressing-room and I was told to uncover. I took off my overcoat, then my coat, and stood up before the officer and asked: "How far?" "Keep going," he said. I continued, and later repeated my question. "To the skin," he replied. When thus stripped the bottoms of my feet and my back and my head were examined. My clothes, my shoes, my over-shoes, my watch, my purse, nothing escaped. I came away impressed with German efficiency, and yet it was all done with courtesy and order and system and dispatch. I also visited many places and saw a good bit of German life, as I mingled freely with the people, and yet from the time I entered German territory till I left it my whereabouts were always known. You may not like their method of warfare and you may oppose their hard military system, but one thing is certain, you cannot visit Germany as I did and come away without feeling that they are a wonderfully skilful and efficient people—without feeling, too, that some of this efficiency would be a good thing for America.

BACK TO ENGLAND.

From Germany I passed on through Holland by way of The Hague and crossed the North sea to England. That sea is literally a bed of submarines and mines and no ship dares to cross in the night time. The minesweepers followed our ship for miles and miles, and I saw the big guns shoot and explode mine after mine. I passed within sight of Ostend, now held by the Germans, and could hear the continuous roar of the cannon from the trenches near Flushing. In England I visited the House of Lords and the House of Commons and heard Lloyd-George and Sir Edward Carson speak on the compulsion enlistment measure. The country is beginning to realize that it is at war, and both the people and the powers that be seem resolved now to fight to a finish. I saw thousands of soldiers, both in Germany and England, who had been or were getting ready to go to the front, and the general opinion is that both sides are planning for a supreme effort in the spring.

TERRIBLE NIGHTMARE.

As I have already said, my trip home was a terrible nightmare. We encountered a furious storm at sea, which blew from 90 to 100 miles an hour, and which lasted for 24 hours. The lifeboats were swept away, small leaks were sprung, much crockery and furniture broken, the ship badly torn and several passengers and crew slightly hurt. One of the crew was thrown overboard, but recovered himself by means of a life rope, to which he was fastened. My cabin mate and I felt certain that the ship

would go down, and there were many others who shared in this opinion. It is no wonder that I am glad to be back in South Carolina in favored circumstances and among my friends.

But you ask me what of the Ford peace expedition? Did it do good or not? Measured by motive and purpose, my answer is emphatically "Yes." No one can measure influence. No one has a right to say that a movement such as this is of no avail. If you believe as I do that every good word spoken and every good act done is taken into account and blesses somebody somewhere at some time, then I think that a movement for world peace, however futile it may seem, must be credited with being worth while.

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